ABC NEWS-STS-26 LAUNCH (11:20 A.M E.T -11:58 A M E.T) (9-29-1988)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRyw5455ZSQ (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRyw5455ZSQ)

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From September 29th, 1988 ABC News Live coverage of the Launch of STS-26 which was the first post Challenger disaster mission. This was the 26th Space Shuttle mission. Reported by ABC NEWS Peter Jennings.

- Coverage runs from 11:20 A.M E.T - 11:58 A.M E.T)

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is an abc news special report the launch of discovery america's return to space now reporting from the kennedy space center in florida peter jennings [Music] well we said we'd come back when this bird was ready to fly this bird is ready to fly i'm peter jennings at the kennedy space center along with former astronaut gene cernan and current astronaut dick richards discovery is ready to go all of the signs that we get now from launch control is that the countdown which is presently at t minus nine minutes and holding will resume within a couple of minutes at that point the only thing that will prevent this bird from launching will be a major problem that will cause some kind of an abort that is to say once this clock begins again at nine minutes and counting down everything is programmed for a launch from cape kennedy cape canaveral on this glorious florida day where the temperature is 86 degrees and where jeans turn on the weather upstairs has apparently improved to their satisfaction well they haven't really told us yet but we've got to begin to assume that it has because i can feel even listening to the to the launch comp from the uh launch control center here you feel the pulse the activity pick up i think we're going one of the things that is happening at the moment richards is that uh bob crippen who's the man in charge the man who will make the final decision is asking everybody else what they think right that's correct you know actually the launch director is the one that's doing the poll however bob crippen uh former astronaut is uh he's got the final say and i believe we just heard him say that we're ready to go so we're just once we get these last details sorted out we should start let's listen to uh launch control uh cdr week copy we need a repeat on weather

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launch director you want to summarize they have just recently been given the weather overseas at the alternate locations one in spain and one in morocco where they could land if they were obliged to abort this flight before they actually got into orbit they have been told that at marone in spain the weather is fine but that ben gurir in morocco which is the backup site the winds are a bit too strong at the moment let's listen current weather conditions we got some scattered low stuff below 5 000 we got some towers offshore that they're topping out around fourteen thousand uh none of that rick just wants an update for kennedy weather for rtls i see that's uh rick who's the commander on board remember they are rick hauck dick covey david hillmers mike lounge pinky nelson the only civilian on board he's the astronomer the commander is rick houck the pilot is dick covey all military men with a heavy proponents i might as well get it out of the way now of navy gene cernan i wonder when you say that we're really beginning to run the show aren't we we decided to take an air force guy with us on this trip you're navy the greatest your navy there's a lot of navy about dick truly bob krippen i think we go way back from alan shepard work our way up uh we're getting our plug in aren't we well we're getting it in but we do have we're well represented with our air force counterparts and uh dick covey's going to do a good job today okay let's go back to launch pad 39b the same pad from which challenger lifted off 32 months ago and what an intervening 32 months it has been because america has lagged farther behind the soviets they've had to virtually redesign not only the space shuttle but almost everything else the internet almost the entire system the way people

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almost the entire system the way people operate the way we look at the launch it's really a test flight of the entire spectrum of our of our return to space the insurer who's out at the uh this is the vvip area a very very important person area they've just told us now receive a goal from all elements of the launch team including bob crippen who is the uh deputy director of the national space transportation system and the head of the mission management team uh we'll be picking up the count uh down clock at 11 28 at the t minus nine minute point which would give us a liftoff time at 11 37 uh eastern daylight time this morning during this period recorders which document the operation of the final minutes of the countdown and the flight recorders have been turned on let's go back to that area where abc's lynn sure is linda's covered space for us for a long time paid an enormous amount of attention to the whole inquiry and the rogers commission which found out first what was wrong with challenger and then emphasized the redesign and restructuring the organization lynn first of all who's out there and then give us if you were just a brief lesson on how much redesign there's been uh peter there are a number of uh vips if you will here some of them have famous names some of them don't but very interestingly a number of the senators who are meant to be here have made it over to your site they were not staying away so they didn't stick around they've also been kept away from us by yellow ropes and grandstands so we'll get to them a little bit later but one of the gentlemen who is here of course is william rogers who is head of the rogers commission we haven't seen him yet i understand he is here he um he was in charge of the commission that demanded that this bird be redesigned there are more than 400 changes on the orbiter itself on discovery most of the serious changes however are on those rocket boosters and of course it was a seal in the rocket booster that that broke if you will that let the gas escape that caused the challenger explosion two and a half years ago so the rocket

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and a half years ago so the rocket boosters have been enormously redesigned um the joint that that malfunctioned another joint as well and what nasa did was they took it upon themselves uh and they were directed by the president to do so to take the opportunity to redesign the entire system the idea was let's see what else there might be that might cause problems in the future they didn't want any surprises um you know of course peter and i'm sure the world is now aware that the that the leak in the rocket booster was a surprise to everyone except for a few engineers who seems had not let the information get up to the right places at nasa so the astronauts have gotten more involved in management and in redesign the engineers now have much more of a say if they think something is wrong their voices generally get heard i talked to bob crippen a couple of weeks ago and i asked him what the biggest change was in all of nasa in the last two and a half years and he said communication he said no one is bashful about bringing up something that they think is wrong and their concerns are heard at the top the crew as well was very proud of the fact that they have had the opportunity and they have taken advantage of the opportunity to sit in on meetings to help make decisions about how the shuttle will be redesigned and how the management changes would be made and you know it was really interesting peter one of them said to me go ahead peter you may hear faint applause scattered applause down here and that is because you can see at the bottom of your picture out on 39b the clock has started again we are eight minutes 40 seconds approximately from liftoff then please continue sorry what i was just going to add was that a number of the crew members and other astronauts i spoke to said you know everyone's talking about the fact that astronauts now have a voice in things and a couple of them said to me you know we've always had a voice in things but we didn't always take advantage of it well you can bet they are all taking advantage of it right now and will continue to for as long as they can have the time one of their problems by the way is that now that they're going to have missions again they hope they may not have as much time to get as

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they may not have as much time to get as involved in planning and management and redesign as they have but they are certainly going to try and the ones i've spoken to believe that this is indeed a safer system coming up it is not risk-free no space flight ever is but they are very proud that they've had a voice in that peter lynn thanks very much who has uh done them on other things earlier in our broadcast the biographies of the crew let's take another look at the crew again now as we watch this countdown clock continue because it is then people are so concerned about today obviously rick houck who's the commander he's uh regarded as being incredibly laconic incredibly cool he's 47 years old he's flown twice before he's on his third mission he is third generation navy he's the commander in charge if they have to abort he's the man who fly the shuttle back to the kennedy space center or somewhere else his pilot is dick covey he's 42 he's in the air force he was a pilot on the discovery mission in september of 1985 he was selected as an astronaut in 78 there is another of those indications at the moment that things are proceeding that is the crew access arm moving back at the very end there is the white room you saw earlier where the crew went out and got their final preparations put on their survival suits which they are wearing for the first time ever into space to this degree and now that last remaining physical link is now being removed from discovery itself talk just a little bit about those survival suits for the very first time in the wake of the challenger explosion they're wearing suits which weigh 80 some odd pounds i think 80 some odd pounds which self contain a parachute and which contain a life raft and oxygen and they will wear them on liftoff and they will wear them on return let's go back to the crew for just a second you met rick hauck and mike covey there's dave hilmers he's one of the mission

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hilmers he's one of the mission specialists he's a physicist he's a former navy pilot he's 38 he's already flown in space he's been on one shuttle flight he's told some of us the other day what it was like to sit on top of this enormous fuel tank at this moment he said mainly you think about god let's not screw this out dave hilmers george pinkey nelson his name is george nobody else knows him as anything except pinkie nelson he's the phys the astronomer he's the civilian he's 38 years old um he's always got that smile on his face he was a member of the crew of the last successful shuttle mission and his primary role on this flight is to conduct a series of experiments and on launch today he's sitting all by himself down on the mid deck let's listen to launch controls we'll collect measurements of shuttle systems during flight and be played back afterwards at the five minute point the orbiter test conductor will ask pilot dick covey to start the auxiliary power units which provide hydraulic power for steering and controlling flight surfaces that's hugh harris in launch control who's just really bringing us up to date with the sequencing that we're going to go through we're t minute t minus four minutes 57 seconds and counting and we owe you one more member of the crew before they take what they call the beanie off there let's have a quick look at the picture of mike lounge his name is john everybody calls him mike he also is a mission specialist he's a physicist he's been up before as we said this is the most experienced crew that we have had in the air so far there's the crew as they sit gene on board this morning always ask you on these occasions to take us back to your own flights and give us some sense of what you think they may be thinking about at this point after two years of training i got to tell you they've got the feeling they're really going to go uh and it's uh it's an exhilarating feeling uh it's it's some you sit there and say

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it's it's some you sit there and say don't stop me now as soon as those bolts blow as soon as you're on your way then you know you've really you've really got something in your hands and that comment about oh don't let me screw up is when it goes through everyone's head we want to be able to do the best possible job better than it's ever been done before these guys are finally anxious at this point in time but i'm sure we're confident and joe allen the astronaut give us some sense of being on board at this point you've been there two or three pre-programs well they're sitting and then uh waiting for the main engine start they'll be watching everything aboard the shuttle it's all being done automatically now and it's pretty much out of their control and indeed although people on the ground are watching it's being controlled aboard the orbiter itself let's listen to launch control by their readiness to uh support the ascent flight control after going through their paces they'll be aligned to their start positions hugh harris again telling us we are t minus three minutes approximately and counting the orbiter is already going to go on its internal power in fact has just gone on to its internal power they're going to remove that cap from the top of the external tank that's that liquid hydrogen and oxygen it's partly keeping pressure down and helping to vent off of the pressure but it's also warming there's a heater up there to keep ice from forming on the top of that tank as well it should be moving away here pretty quick and of course the reason they worry about ice is that ice might form and fall and damage the shuttle itself that's correct the thermal protection system's uh uh sophisticated but brittle so we try to protect it to the best extent possible the thermal protection system in layman's language which you use to protect yourself when removing this cap

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liquid hydrogen replenish of the external tank has stopped giving you some indication of the interest here at the kennedy space center itself when challenger lifted off from here 32 months ago from all over the world and as we acknowledged a little earlier on this one occasion everybody urging america back into space participating in a hole here we just heard that about 31 seconds the problem has not been defined okay that's that uh i believe that's that uh again that alarm that we were expecting there which is down into the cabin and bumping this upper limit and so i suspect we'll pick it up here now this is the survival suits which uh dick richards is referring to they are peggy parton they will now proceed with the cap there will be no hold we're gonna leave this now to hugh harris the voice of launch control 31 seconds we have a goal for auto sequence start discoveries for redundant computers have assumed t minus 23 seconds and counting the srb nozzle profile t-minus 15. 14

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t-minus 15. 14 13 12 11 10. we're go for main engine start seven six we have main engine start three two one zero and liftoff liftoff americans return to space as discovery clears the tower fuel [Music] a certain speed as the spacecraft passes through max q [Music] three engines at 65 now mark one minute velocity 2300 feet per second altitude 5.9 nautical miles downrange resistance three nautical miles maximum speed already velocity 3200 feet per second altitude 10.8 nautical miles downrange distance eight nautical miles a little over two minutes those solid rocket boosters ought to have done their job and that's been one of the key focal points on this mission glorious day those are the long range tracking cameras 25 seconds from solid rocket booster separation 25 seconds those outboard rockets will fall off having done their job 45 seconds three engines 104 we've never

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45 seconds three engines 104 we've never had better pictures major milestone coming up velocity 4 800 feet per second altitude 20 nautical miles downrange distance 19 nautical miles miles an hour right now that was a key point get rid of our solid rocket boosters which caused challenger's disaster someone did their job right and they will return to earth they are recoverable they are recoverable they'll come by parachute now being powered by that main external tank pushing it driving it towards orbit three apu is still running at all speed fuel cells this trajectory peter was uh exceptionally under hydra shortly from the capcom about the capability to reach transatlantic conservative trajectory in some cases but they haven't got an enormous payload this time how quickly things change we got about another five minutes to go [Music] some corrections [Applause]

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nautical miles downrange distance 107 nautical miles [Music] standing by for negative returns take a look at those figures just on the side of your screen you get some enormous sense of of speed now they're traveling at about 5 000 feet per second and ultimately of course you'll be pushing 17 negative returns it means negative return back to this landing side now we're going eight cents to the launch site in the event of an abort four minutes 20 seconds velocity 8 700 feet per second altitude 59 nautical miles downrange distance

148. that's a great sight but this means if they lost an engine now they can still land safely in africa very soon we're going to achieve orbit capability though and that means that this engines and still push themselves because they've got so much velocity at this point peter how do you feel you've been asking that all the further they go 30 seconds velocity 10 300 feet per second altitude 65.7 nautical miles downrange distance 203 nautical miles still picking up speed very quickly they're really hauling a male at this point in time there's very little atmosphere to slow them down they're getting lighter because they're burning their fuel and those engines are still putting out just as much thrust just initially most of the launch trajectory was vertical to get out of the atmosphere and now it's more horizontal to go for speed when they get into orbit of course they'll go around the world at 17 000 miles per hour once every 90 minutes sunrise in the sunset group 109.

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because it was tremendously exciting here there's still an enormous cloud of smoke in the sky but here is the launch scene from various perspectives here at the space center americans return to space as discovery clears the tower you see the way she rotates she flies up on her back going straighter than usual for some reason we always seem to go into orbit on our back we've been doing that since the early days of mercury now let's take a look at it from yet another angle that's what we saw zero and liftoff liftoff americans returned to space as discovery clears the tower that's what it looks like from our anchor booth and you get some scent look at the top of your screen they look at the sense of speed now look at one more three engines at 104 main engines start seven six starts three they're now 60 miles above the earth accelerating and lift off americans returned to space as discovery clears them they haven't got a they put down there into the launch pad which now by the way will go back and be reused again it just causes an enormous ruins tops of cars all over the neighborhood there's a lot of metal i believe aluminum perhaps flakes in there that get pretty hot come out of there and here one more look from another angle one the engines are running perfectly now tremendous tremendous smoke here which

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tremendous tremendous smoke here which still lingers over the space center on this gloriously hot day it's up around 86 degrees now we're back to our animation now because the next event will be the main engine cutoff in about 35 seconds from now and then there's no doubt what's wrong with it with when does the main tank come off approximately 17 seconds after the engine head off right and then falls and burns up in the atmosphere tumbles back in that's the one piece they cannot recover and then they will get away from manage and cut off velocity 24 600 feet per second altitude 59 nautical miles downrange distance 700 nautical miles standing by for main engine cutoff confirmed discovery's three main engines have now shut down is programmed and still discovery drives forward it's the last big maneuver discovery homes one not required well now they're in they're in an orbit but not completely uh a circular orbit they have a low average around 30 or a low percentage of around 35 miles an hour so they're going to the high point of the orbit at about 160 miles they'll fire their engines at that point about 40 minutes to bring up the low part of the orbit and it'll be 160 circular let's talk for just a second when we come back about now what this means america is back in demand space flight and we will be back in a second to say what it means for the future of the space program and the men and women who fly in it we'll be right back this has been abc news coverage of the return to space the launch of discovery brought to you by at t [Music]

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abc news coverage of the launch of discovery the return to space continues that's 39b discovery has gone and that patch you saw at the beginning had that you may have noticed a big dipper on the patch that they're wearing on their spacesuits seven stars seven stars for the seven members of the challenger crew 32 months ago but america is back with its manned space program and as we look at 39b and in the few minutes remaining as they make their way into the orbit exactly they want to have they're about 60 65 miles above the earth down a long long way downrange made it into orbit without any great deal of difficulty at all perfect launch i want to get some impressions of people around the country at the houston has now taken over control of this launch we were launch control here at the cape now it is mission control in houston and that's where we find the shuttle astronaut joe allen joe what do you think oh i'm almost speechless peter i share every emotion in the book and uh we are indeed back uh uh what can i say it's gorgeous mort mort dean who's on there besides to what uh joe said peter america is back in space and uh the rest of the mission though will continue to be a major test of the space shuttle a lot of changes for the landing and we're going to see how the new brakes work and how the reinforced uh landing gear worked and uh the ship has a way to go to prove itself but uh certainly been a good start we've made sorry go ahead well i would like to uh ask that that very same question of steve nesbitt right now he's the voice of mission control and was there two and a half years ago and i know steve is rejoicing because he took us all the way to orbit today also that's great you say you'd like to ask it of him i would but he's working right now that's what i wonder what you were saying there for a second um we want to talk a little bit about the meaning of this um let's come to you gene this is as you said many times early today this is a test fight in some respects isn't it i'm excited i feel like you know a lot of thousands of people who made this all

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of thousands of people who made this all happen i feel like we air had something to do with it too but the sobering thought about all this success at least a success thus far is that one one flight does not make a space program we still have to after the success of this fight and those that follow look into the future and find out where this country is going and literally put a far-reaching program together that's my primary concern it's very sober and common at this ecstatic moment but it's something i think we have to begin to think of and that's what this that's the mode in the environment that this flight put us in dick rich is the uh i don't cover space all the time but i certainly hear it from people all the time that we really don't have a space program that what we've done is redesign a vehicle um put a lot more safety in it but don't have a space program what is shuttle discovery going to mean now well it gets that's our primary that's our only manned spacecraft vehicle that puts us back and uh puts us back in business so we're going to depend on the shuttle to uh erect and construct the space station which would give us a permanent presence but like gene says we've got a number of flights to do that but the best way to do it is take it one flight at a time which is what we did today and it's certainly encouraging you know we put in 400 improvements here and uh martin dean was right we've still got the rest of the mission to go but we just flight tested about two to three hundred of those changes in that eight minute sequence and everything as you can tell you were listening you didn't discover any anomalies at all i could see none i heard nothing from the flight control team nothing from the crew everything appeared perfect after all those uh two and a half years of all those late night meetings and arguments it all came together and it worked today so i'm sure that there's about 200 000 space people here in this country that are that worked on this project that are happy this is mission control in houston and as we look that and perhaps at a replay of the uh liftoff itself let's ask lynn sure lynn you have you've watched all these changes firsthand in many cases what do you think this morning well uh let me first tell you peter that i don't think i started breathing again until i heard the one minute mark was passed uh that was an absolutely extraordinary experience to stand here and watch that shuttle go up knowing as much as we know about what

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knowing as much as we know about what happened over the past two and a half years obviously starting with challenger as far as what happened today and what it means for the future i think that dick richards is right we do indeed we excuse me nasa needs to we as a country have to do something else nasa needs to take one step at a time in terms of hardware i think though what we as a country have to do is look at the bigger picture it is absolutely true that a shuttle is not a space program the shuttle is an extraordinary machine it can do fabulously complex and exciting things in space but it doesn't constitute an entire space program dick talked about the space station the space station is not fully funded uh the current administration has really left it up to the next administration to decide whether they want a space station we as a nation need to decide if we want it and if we want the one that's there now beyond that we need to decide if we want to spend our money on sending men and women into space oops we have a little bit of uh helicopter noise here peter sorry some of our folks are leaving okay um we as a nation need to decide if we want to spend our money on sending men and women into space and if we do what we'd like them to do there do we want to go back to the moon and set up a permanent mission do we want to go on to mars do we want to just send robotic spacecraft in order to explore the planets uh further out into the solar system and the rest of the universe these are basic decisions that we as a nation need to make and we can't make them unless some elected officials are talking about them maybe we don't want to spend this kind of money on space if we don't we have to decide that and i think i sort of hope that the launch the successful launch of this shuttle today and what we obviously all hope will be a successful mission and we obviously will be following it for the next four days will get people thinking what do we really want to do there that to me uh would be the great legacy of the challenger explosion okay lynn thank you very much indeed lyncher who covers space for us and uh has looked into the future perhaps more closely than most of us i want to go back to mark dean for a second uh out at mission control in houston mark because there's been a lot of talk in this intervening 32 months about what this has done to america vis-a-vis the soviets and

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to america vis-a-vis the soviets and where do we now get left in terms of american soviet competition in space well i think the competition is going to increase not only from the soviets but from uh the europeans with ariane and possibly from five or six other countries i think lynn is absolutely correct i think this uh country space program is in danger of becoming well similar to what happened with america's automobile manufacturers losing their edge to foreign entrepreneurs and foreign manufacturers i think that somebody has to take hold of the space program otherwise the united states is going to be left behind whether it's a manned space program or some other kind of space program i think somebody has to set the direction and set it soon mort thanks very much dick richards uh you're ready to go and fly on one of these things how do you like hearing about the chinese and the europeans are going to be delivering payloads into space and leaving us behind well uh space is uh obviously a big place and uh we're gonna be operating that in the next 100 years i think that's one place where uh international cooperation or competition or whatever that's there's adventures enough out there for all of us so i think that's an area if anything where we can all participate together in and maybe it might be so big that someday we're going to realize we're going to need each other's help in order to do that extremely diplomatic and wise answer as we perhaps take one more look at this lift off this morning because it does go so far doesn't it to erase that last liftoff which we've all had etched in our mind's eye for so long let's etch the new one in our imagination and lift off lift though up americans return to space as discovery clears the tower and have some final comments from you gene cernan about 30 seconds the burden seemed to be lifted history is now truly history this is current events uh this is a new beginning i believe in it very strongly uh i have faith that this country we will realize what technology means to our future

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what technology means to our future position in the world they've reminded us all for the intervening 32 months since challenger that human error is always there they estimate that sometime in the next two or the seven years we'll have another accident in space it reminds me of what historians tell us she couldn't have moved across the country if you hadn't put people's lives at risk to discover the country and it's always going to be the same way in space but for today wasn't it terrific i mean it flew and it flew beautifully and what more could you ask on such a great day thanks everybody for uh joining me for this wonderful occasion i'm peter jennings at the kennedy space center at cape canaveral in florida hope you'll join us later for world news tonight until then continue to have a good day this has been an abc news special report we now resume our regular program schedule after this from our local stations

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